

GEOGRAPHICAL RECORD

CHAUNCY D. HARRIS (1914–2003), GEOGRAPHER EXTRAORDINAIRE*

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The name Chauncy Dennison Harris has a special resonance for most geographers. I first became aware of this in the 1960s when, as a boy, I would ask my geographer father about his travels to professional meetings and his opinions about geography programs in different parts of the country. Chauncy Harris's name sticks out in my memories of those conversations, not because my father knew him particularly well but because of the obvious respect my father had for him.

It is possible, of course, that Harris's name made such an impression simply because it sounded so distinguished to young ears. After all, it is difficult to imagine that anyone named Chauncy Dennison Harris could be an intellectual lightweight or someone with a frivolous approach to life. But in all likelihood the name made such a strong impression because of the way my father spoke of the man.

It is hardly surprising that my father held Harris in high esteem. Harris had done pioneering work on the Soviet Union, he had established a healthy dialogue between Soviet and American scholars, and he had made significant contributions to the literature in urban geography. He had also held the kinds of positions that reflect prominence and accomplishment: dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University of Chicago (1954–1960), president of the Association of American Geographers (1957), president of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (1962), and secretary-general and treasurer of the International Geographical Union (1968–1976).

HARRIS AS SCHOLAR

Remarkably, Harris held some of the highest positions in the world of geography well before he turned fifty. How did this happen? Part of the answer lies in his devotion to study, research, and writing. Born and raised in Utah, Harris earned a B.A. from Brigham Young University (where his father was president) at the age of nineteen. Graduate studies took him first to the University of Chicago, then to the University of Oxford and the London School of Economics (under the auspices of a

* Several accounts of Harris's life and career contributions were of help in preparing this note. I benefited particularly from a memorial written by Harris's long-time colleague, Marvin Mikesell, for the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (Mikesell 2004); a note on Harris's influence on *Eurasian Geography and Economics* and its predecessor publications by one of that journal's contributing editors (Bond 2004); a discussion of Harris's influence on urban geography by a former colleague (Berry 2004); and the opening chapter of a Festschrift published in Harris's honor (Rogers 1984). Parts of the ensuing sections on "Harris as Scholar" and "Harris as Disciplinary and Institutional Citizen" were based on a short memorial essay I wrote for *Ubique*, the newsletter of the American Geographical Society (Murphy 2004).

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